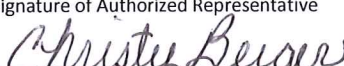


Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband

BROADBAND EXPANSION GRANT APPLICATION

For Fiscal Year 2022

 Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
 RECEIVED: 03/17/2022 8:37:31 AM

Primary Applicant (Name and Address): Nelson Communications Cooperative dba Ntec 318 Third Ave W PO BOX 228 Durand, WI 54736	Applications MUST be UPLOADED to ERF via the Commission's website, http://psc.wi.gov/apps35/ERF_upload/content/mymenu.aspx . Refer to section 2.3 for detailed instructions. Applications are due and MUST be uploaded to ERF no later than: March 17, 2022 , at 4:00pm (16:00) Central Time. Late applications will not be accepted.		
	Contact for further information: PSCStatebroadbandoffice@wisconsin.gov		
	Date: December 1, 2021		
<p>The Public Service Commission of Wisconsin is seeking applications for Broadband Expansion Grants. The Commission may award one or more grants during Fiscal Year 2022 to public and private entities that meet the eligibility requirements set forth in Wis. Stat. § 196.504. This grant round will be funded with bond proceeds authorized by the Wisconsin Building Commission pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 13.48(30). As such, successful applicants are subject to the requirements of Wis. Stat. § 13.48(30). Successful applicants will demonstrate a clear and achievable plan to improve broadband communications services in one or more underserved areas in the State.</p>			
<p>Applicant Certification: In signing this application, the undersigned verifies under penalty of perjury that the Applicant and its employees and agents have not, either directly or indirectly, entered into any agreement or participated in any collusion or otherwise taken any action in restraint of free competition with respect to this application; that no attempt has been made to induce any other person or firm to submit or not to submit an application; that this application has been independently arrived at without collusion with any other proposer, competitor or potential competitor; that this application has not been knowingly disclosed prior to the opening of applications to any other applicant or competitor; that all of the responses and representations of Applicant in this application are true and correct to the best of the undersigned's knowledge, information, and belief; and that Applicant agrees to, accepts, and will comply with all of the terms and conditions respecting this application and any award of a broadband expansion grant as may be established in a grant award Agreement.</p>			
Name of Authorized Representative (Type or Print) Christy Berger	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> Title GM/Exec VP </td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> Phone () 715-672-4204 </td> </tr> </table>	Title GM/Exec VP	Phone () 715-672-4204
Title GM/Exec VP	Phone () 715-672-4204		
Signature of Authorized Representative 	Date 3/10/2022		

Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband

SUMMARY OF GRANT APPLICATION

Primary Applicant Name Nelson Communications Cooperative dba Ntec	Amount of Broadband Grant Request (round to nearest dollar) \$1,254,528
Federal Employer Identification No. 39-0790115	Amount of Matching Funds Pledged (round to nearest dollar) \$871,791
Contact Name and Title Laura Gullickson, CFO	Total Cost of Proposed Project (round to nearest dollar) \$2,126,319
Telephone Number 715-672-4204	Project Name Town of Albany & Town of Canton
E-mail Address(es) laura@ntec.net	Type of Proposed Broadband Service (FTTH, Cable, DSL, etc.) FTTH
Grant Manager, if different than Primary Applicant N/A	Type of Proposed Project (Last-mile, Middle-Mile, backbone, other) Last-Mile
Grant Manager Contact Name N/A	Grant Manager Email Address and Telephone Number N/A
If the application proposes a public-private partnership, list the names, addresses, and FEINs of the partner companies or organizations Pepin County 39-6005728, 740 Seventh Ave W, Durand, WI 54736; attn. Pamela Hansen 715-672-8704 phansen@co.pepin.wi.us Town of Albany, 39- 6008073, W1471 Albany W, Mondovi, WI 54755, Chairman Adolph Pichler, clerk Julie Heck albanytownshipcler@yahoo.com Buffalo County 39-6005673, 407 S 2 nd Street, Alma, WI 54610, Stephen Schiffli, Economic Development Coordinator, 608-685-9101 Stephen.schiffli@co.buffalo.wi.us Town of Canton, 39-1356780, W1660 Fichtenbauer Rd, Nelson, WI 54755, Chairman Tony Poeschel poescheltony@gmail.com	
Brief Project Description (2 sentences) This application expands FTTH broadband to the Township of Albany and the Township of Canton in Wisconsin's agricultural sector. Parts of this area are Unserved by PSC definition. Ntec requests partial funding of \$1,254,528 of a total project cost of \$2,126,319	
Maximum Proposed Download Transmission Speed FTTH: up to 1 GIG	Maximum Proposed Upload Transmission Speed FTTH: up to 1 GIG
Minimum Proposed Download Speed to Customer Location 50 Mbps	Minimum Proposed Upload Transmission Speed to Customer Location 50 Mbps
County or Counties served by this project Pepin County & Buffalo County, Wisconsin	Community or Communities served by this project Town of Albany and Town of Canton

Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband

List of the broadband service providers, if any, currently serving the area the applicant proposes to serve Frontier, Hughesnet, Viasat	
Does proposed project serve an <u>unserved</u> area of the State, as defined in Section 1.4 of the application instruction? (yes/no) Yes per speed tests, no per PSC map	Is the Applicant certified as a Broadband Forward! Community or Telecommuter Forward! Community, or does the grant project propose to serve a Broadband Forward! Community or Telecommuter Forward! Community? (yes/no) Yes
For last mile projects or component, the expected number of Business Locations that will have access to the improved broadband service (i.e., total business locations passed or with new service access). 24	For last mile projects or components, the expected number of Residential Locations that will have access to the improved broadband service (i.e., total residential locations passed or with new service access). 212
Of the improved business locations, how many locations are <i>unserved</i> ? Not all tested, 9 reported speeds less than 2/.5 Mbps	Of the improved residential locations, how many are <i>unserved</i> ? Of those that reported, 27 reported speeds of 3 or less
For providers that are eligible telecommunications carriers will the proposed broadband service be available to Lifeline customers? (yes/no) Yes	Are there any programs available for low-income households to access low-cost service or discounts? (yes/no) Yes
Is the internet service provider currently participating in the Emergency Broadband Benefit Program? (yes/no) Yes	Is the internet service provider currently participating in the Department of Public Instruction and CESA purchasing's Digital Learning Bridge? (yes/no) Yes
Did the internet service provider participate in the Public Service Commission's voluntary Broadband Coverage Data Collection in 2012? (yes/no) Yes	

FY22 Broadband Expansion Grant Application

Budget & Income Summary



Please complete this form using Microsoft Excel. A PDF copy must be attached to your application as page four. In addition, this form must also be uploaded to ERF in Excel format.

Grant Summary

Grant Applicant:	Project:
Ntec	Town of Albany and Town of Canton

Budget

Line:	Description / Category:	Grant Funds:	Match:	Total:
1	Contractual, Consultant Fees	\$ 98,635.39	\$ 68,543.23	\$ 167,178.62
2	Equipment	\$ 1,148,388.18	\$ 798,032.47	\$ 1,946,420.65
3	Supplies			\$ -
4	Labor (Salary, Fringe)	\$ 7,504.80	\$ 5,215.20	\$ 12,720.00
5	Permitting, Licensing Fees			\$ -
6	Travel			\$ -
7	Other			\$ -
Total:		\$ 1,254,528.37	\$ 871,790.90	\$ 2,126,319.27
41.0% match requested				

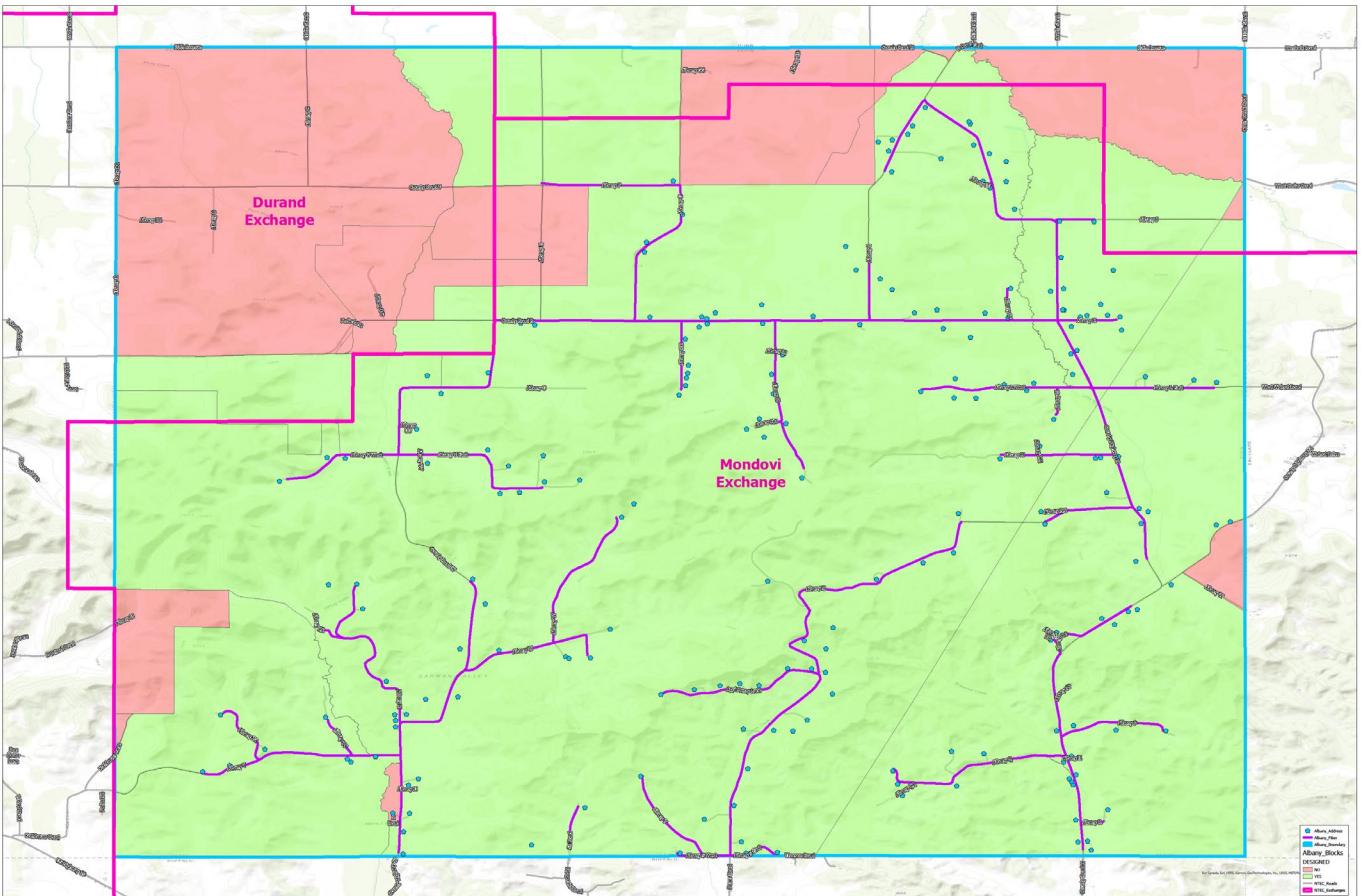
Pledged Contributions

#:	Entity:	Entity Type:	Pledge Type:	Pledge:
1	Buffalo County	Partner	Cash	\$ 97,000.00
2	Town of Canton	Partner	Cash	\$ 31,191.23
3	Town of Albany	Applicant	Cash	\$ 100,000.00
4	Pepin County	Partner	Cash	\$ 100,000.00
5	Ntec	Partner	Cash	\$ 543,599.67
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
Total:				\$ 871,790.90

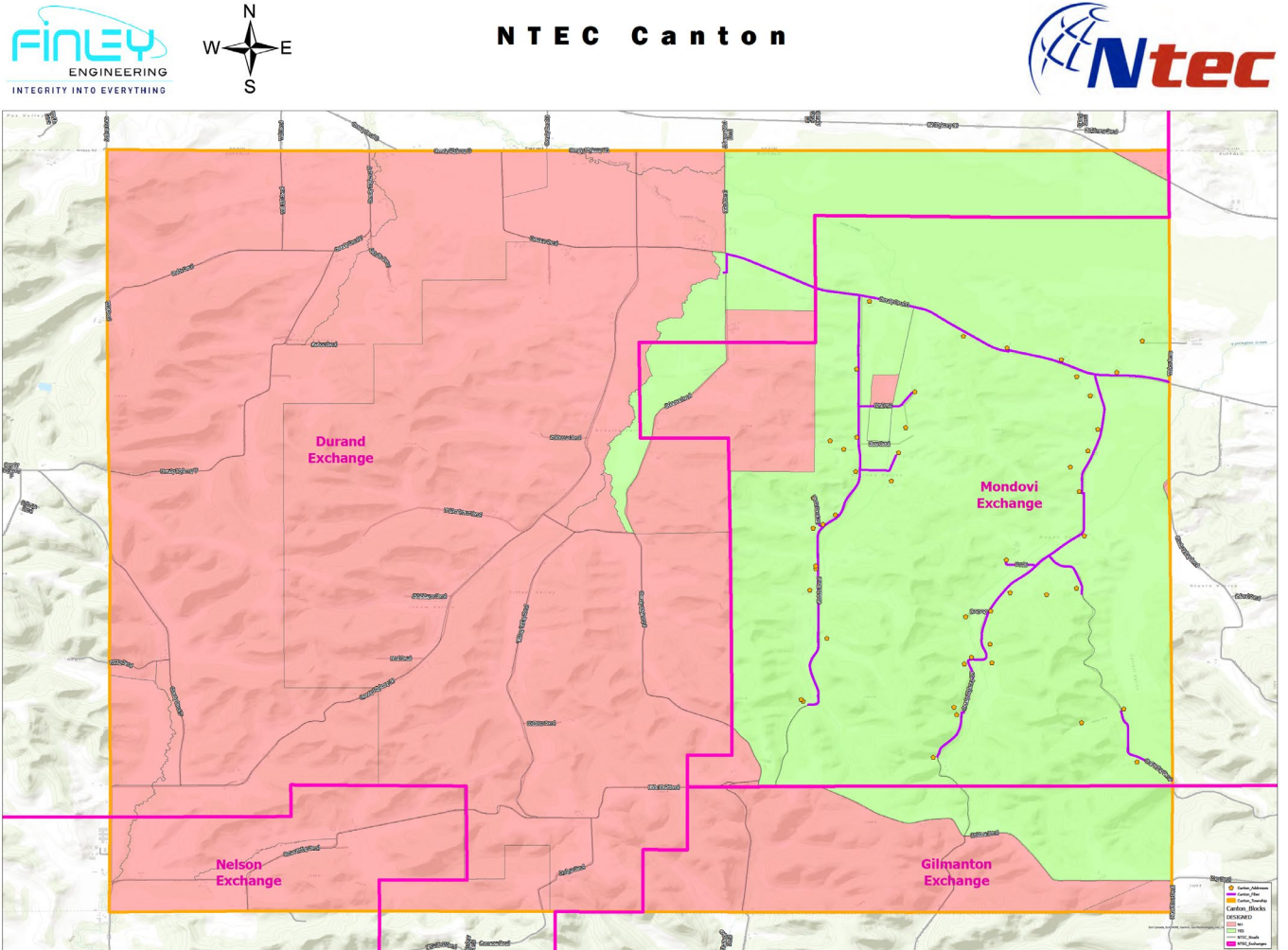
Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband



NTEC Albany

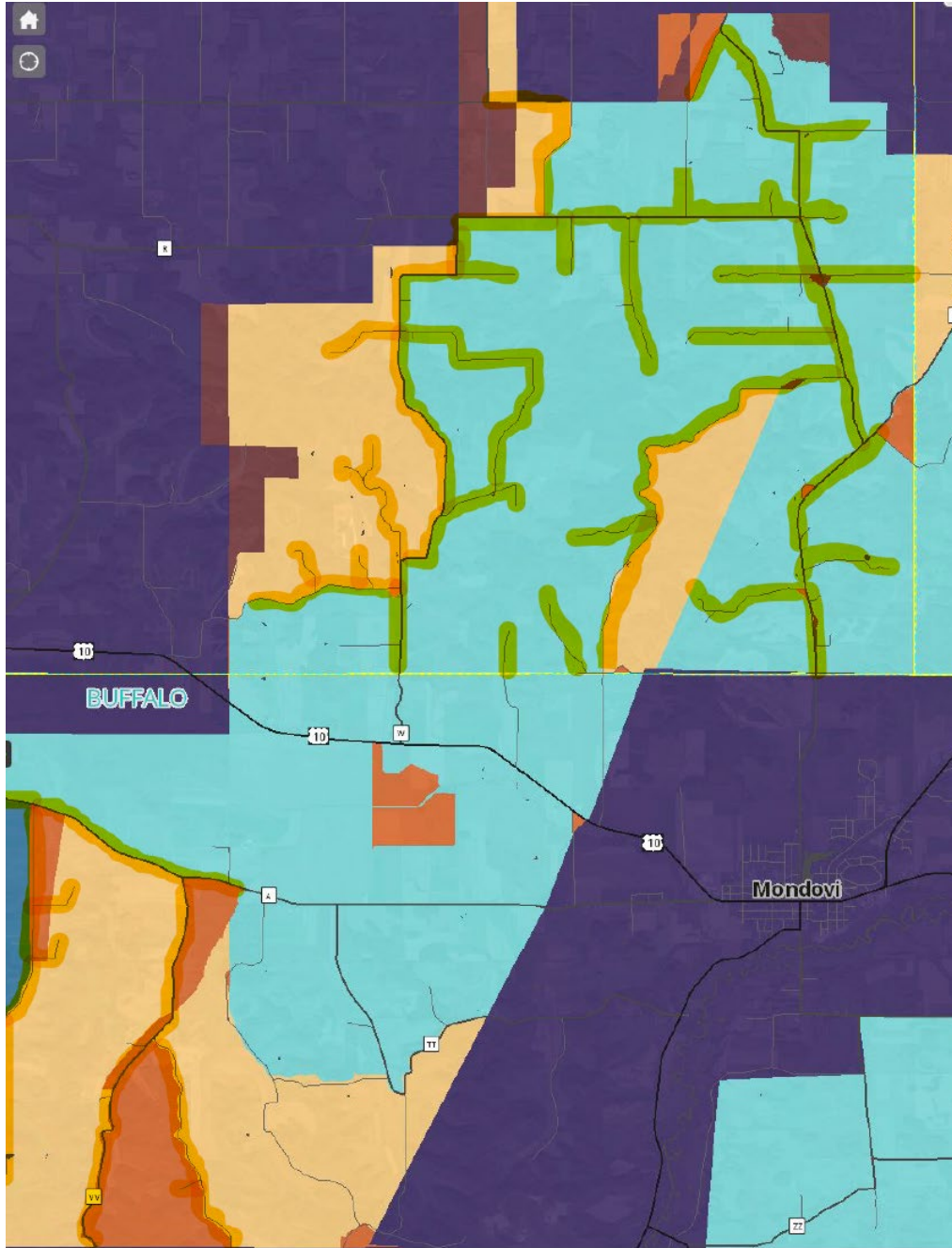


Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband



Albany & Canton Project KMZ files have been separately submitted to the PSCW Broadband Office

Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband



As you can see in the copy of the WI PSC map above, the Town of Albany and Town of Canton do not touch each other, however they are connected by the Town of Mondovi project which we will be constructing this summer. Infrastructure used in the Town of Mondovi project will also be able to be used in both the Canton and Albany Townships where they touch the Town of Mondovi Project. These areas are all marked by Pink or Red in the latest PSC Map with the Broadband Expansion Grant Unserved or Underserved Guidelines.

Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband

The Towns of Albany and Canton are rural doughnut holes completely surrounded by areas served by Fiber (once our Town of Mondovi project is complete). In their ruralness they have been left out of other grant projects.

3.2.1 a) Grant applicant **Nelson: Communications Cooperative dba Ntec**. 318 Third Ave W, Durand, WI 54736, 715-672-4204, Contact Laura Gullickson, CFO, laura@ntec.net.

b) Grant partners in this application:

- Ntec has entered into Public-Private Partnerships with **Pepin County**. The county will be providing a \$100,000 grant for the purpose of this project. Funds will be provided upon completion of construction. Pepin County, Pamela Hansen 715-672-8704 phansen@co.pepin.wi.us
- Ntec has also entered into a Public Private Partnership with **The Town of Albany**, stating they will provide a contribution of \$100,000 to Ntec upon completion of the fiber facilities for the Project. Clerk Julie Heck albanytownshipclerk@yahoo.com
- Ntec has entered into a Public-Private Partnerships with **Buffalo County**. The county will be providing a \$97,000 grant for the purpose of this project. Funds will be provided upon completion of construction. Buffalo County, Stephen Schiffli Economic Development Manager 608-685-9101 stephen.schiffli@co.buffalo.wi.us
- Ntec has also entered into a Public Private Partnership with **The Town of Canton**, stating they will provide a contribution of \$31,191.23 to Ntec upon completion of the fiber facilities for the Project. Chairman Tony Poeschel poescheltony@gmail.com

c) Nelson Communications Cooperative (Ntec) is an Incumbent Local Exchange Carrier certified to provide telecommunications service in the State of Wisconsin pursuant to Section 196.50(2)(b) of the Wisconsin State Statute.

3.2.2 Description of the Project

a) Static map was provided on page 4. This area of Pepin and Buffalo County is especially hilly, which prevents cost effective business cases for privately-funded broadband deployment

b) The project area does NOT lie within a census block designated as served.

c) We will be providing service to 212 locations, included in that total are 40 farms and 24 businesses. Of these, so far 9 business have reported speeds defined as unserved, and 27 residences. There are no seasonal residents or tourists in this area at this time.

Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband

Our internet packages start at 50/50 Mbps symmetrical up to 1 Gbps symmetrical. We will also have a 25/25 package available for low income families.

d) Our project is last mile.

e) Ntec will provide its broadband service exclusively using a fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) network and using Active Ethernet technology. It will be a dedicated network. This fiber network will use the same standards as the company's existing fiber network used in Ntec's existing service territories. We capture economies of scale through expanded use of our existing Calix Infrastructure.

We utilize Calix equipment for the main electronics. B6-318 Blades will be used as well as Calix 716GEI ONTs.

g) Assuming grant awardee notifications by early fall of 2022, and that material availability does not slow the project down, we schedule the following timeline.

- Complete Bids & Contracts November 2022
- Site Surveys February 2023
- Construction begins April 2023
- Splicing begins Fall 2023
- Begin connecting homes Winter 2023
- Project Completed No later than August 2024.

3.2.3 a) Itemized Budget

Ntec will own and operate the proposed broadband network. We have existing Calix Network infrastructures that will be used along with the fiber optic cable that will be buried to each premise.

b) All grant monies will be spent on the construction of a FTTH network in Albany and Canton, WI.

Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband

NTEC Albany & Canton Township OPC					
Unit Quantities	From Contract				
Unit	Labor	Materials	Labor + Mat.	Qty	Extended
BD5	\$ 120.00	\$ 115.20	\$ 235.20	208	\$ 48,921.60
BDFO	\$ 180.00	\$ 450.00	\$ 630.00	8	\$ 5,040.00
BFO12	\$ 2.00	\$ 0.33	\$ 2.33	25124	\$ 58,538.92
BFO24	\$ 2.00	\$ 0.39	\$ 2.39	136576	\$ 326,416.64
BFO48	\$ 2.00	\$ 0.48	\$ 2.48	83552	\$ 207,208.96
BFO48i	\$ 1.40	\$ 0.48	\$ 1.88	0	\$ -
BFO72	\$ 2.00	\$ 0.75	\$ 2.75	0	\$ -
BFO96	\$ 2.00	\$ 0.90	\$ 2.90	21115	\$ 61,233.50
BFO96i	\$ 1.40	\$ 0.90	\$ 2.30	0	\$ -
BFO144	\$ 2.00	\$ 1.05	\$ 3.05	12095	\$ 36,889.75
BFO288	\$ 1.40	\$ 2.45	\$ 3.85	12143	\$ 46,750.55
BFOV(1-1.25)(12W)	\$ 13.00	\$ 3.15	\$ 16.15	0	\$ -
BFOV(1-1.25)(3-12W)	\$ 16.00	\$ 8.35	\$ 24.35	0	\$ -
BFOV(2-1.25)(12W)	\$ 15.00	\$ 3.70	\$ 18.70	0	\$ -
BFOV(2-12W)	\$ 14.00	\$ 5.20	\$ 19.20	0	\$ -
BHF(36x30x36)	\$ 700.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 1,200.00	0	\$ -
BHF-T	\$ 250.00	\$ 190.00	\$ 440.00	208	\$ 91,520.00
BM2(5/8)(8)	\$ 35.00	\$ 35.00	\$ 70.00	216	\$ 15,120.00
BM21-NODE	\$ 700.00	\$ 400.00	\$ 1,100.00	2	\$ 2,200.00
BM53	\$ 35.00	\$ 32.75	\$ 67.75	158	\$ 10,704.50
BM60(1-1.25)	\$ 11.00	\$ 0.55	\$ 11.55	24767	\$ 286,058.85
BM70	\$ 35.00	\$ -	\$ 35.00	200	\$ 7,000.00
BM72	\$ 40.00	\$ 25.00	\$ 65.00	0	\$ -
BM73	\$ 40.00	\$ 35.00	\$ 75.00	0	\$ -
HBFOM	\$ 250.00	\$ 433.35	\$ 683.35	10	\$ 6,833.50
HBFO C-BOX	\$ 250.00	\$ 229.10	\$ 479.10	208	\$ 99,652.80
HBFO Tray	\$ 25.00	\$ 20.10	\$ 45.10	36	\$ 1,623.60
HO1	\$ 35.00	\$ 0.29	\$ 35.29	1909	\$ 67,368.61
HO1P	\$ 40.00	\$ 12.00	\$ 52.00	217	\$ 11,284.00
BM83	\$ 15.00	\$ 4.71	\$ 19.71	217	\$ 4,277.07
FNID	\$ 95.00	\$ 21.68	\$ 116.68	217	\$ 25,319.56
SEBO4	\$ 1.18	\$ 0.24	\$ 1.42	89481	\$ 127,063.02
SEBOV	\$ 2.87	\$ 0.35	\$ 3.22	79016	\$ 254,431.52
Totals					\$ 1,801,456.95
Finley Engineering					84,537.62
Staking					82,641.00
5 Calix Blades					39,205.00
212 ONTs					44,172.32
Power Supply ONT					2,683.92
SFP Lasers					13,246.46
Clearfield Jumpers					15,416.00
Site Surveys (Finley)					30,240.00
Installation (Ntec)			10		12,720.00
Project Total					\$ 2,126,319.27

3.2.4 Priority Factors Supporting the Application

a) Matching Funds Three entities will contribute matching funds toward completion of this key project:

- Pepin County commits to contribute \$100,000.
- The Town of Albany commits to contribute \$100,000
- Buffalo County commits to contribute \$97,000.
- The Town of Canton commits to contribute \$31,191.23, all of its ARPA funds
- Ntec commits to contribute \$640,600, and will self-fund project overruns. (See attached)

b) Public-private partnerships Ntec has entered into a Public-Private Partnership with Buffalo and Pepin County.

- Pepin county will be providing a \$100,000 grant for the purpose of this project. Funds will be provided upon completion of construction. Pepin County, Pamela Hansen 715-672-8704 phansen@co.pepin.wi.us
- The Town of Albany, through a public/private partnership agreement will provide a contribution of \$100,000 to Ntec upon completion of the fiber facilities for the Project. Clerk Julie Heck albanytownshipclerk@yahoo.com
- Buffalo county will be providing a \$97,000 grant for the purpose of this project. Funds will be provided upon completion of construction. Buffalo County, Stephen Schiffli, Economic Development Manager, 608-685-9101 Stephen.schiffli@co.buffalo.wi.us
- The Town of Canton, through a public/private partnership agreement will provide a contribution of \$31,191.23 to Ntec upon completion of the fiber facilities for the Project. Chairman Tony Poeschel , poescheltony@gmail.com

c) Existing broadband service The Wisconsin broadband Map shows incumbent landline provider Frontier Communications advertising DSL speeds at 6/1 Mbps and 12/1 Mbps, Residents who completed speed tests reported much lower speeds. It is on the basis of these speed tests that the state of Wisconsin broadband map should regard much more of the project area as “unserved”.

There is no reason to believe Frontier has plans to fund additional broadband investment in coming years.

Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband

Hughes Net and ViaSat are listed as satellite providers, with availability and broadband speeds regularly limited by topography, weather, and foliage.

No RDOF awards are known to have been made in the proposed project area. LTD Broadband, LLC is known to have received awards to the north and south of the project area, and there are reasons to doubt they will successfully meet FCC obligations in the state of Wisconsin.

Verizon is the only wireless network in the area and has very spotty cellular service.

d) Project Impact The geographic area is rural primarily farmland with very hilly topography. The population density is 17.2 people per square mile, with 5.2 homes per square mile.

Economic development in The Town of Albany has long been stymied by the lack of high-speed broadband services. Businesses in this rural community are, by nature small. Here are just a few examples leading to this application:

- Northside Bar & Grill complains they can't use credit card machines due to unreliable internet; they also can't pay bills or use online ordering.
- Sharon Bauer a farmer, complains that while she can't hear weather sirens in the country, she also can't look up severe weather on the internet. For her farming business she must have a relative who lives elsewhere use his computer to assist them with buying and selling and checking prices.
- Another small business owner would like to use the internet for pricing materials and researching products.
- Berger's ATV Sales & Service complains he cannot order parts and accessories or use online research and manuals to troubleshoot.
- A college student majoring in nursing says she can't sign up for classes only offered online. Several individuals mentioned their children were falling behind in school when they are required to attend classes from home due to Covid.
- A home daycare provider cannot use internet for projects, music lesson ideas, and alphabet games.
- JDJ Rentals, LLC says that the property they own in this area is hard to rent due to lack of internet service, another homeowner is worried about being able to sell their property.
- Jason Kahler wrote, "We need internet to do online school, work from home, run a small business, and read daily news. We feel cut off from society because of poor internet, Frontier is horrible. Please help us." He also said "Employees can't file payroll taxes, send information to accountant, or government reporting feels like a 3rd world country with this internet" He reported speed test of 2.63/.86 Mbps.

Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband

Scariest of all is the story from Mike Wright, whose wife was unable to call 911 when a pole barn fell on him. (See attached newspaper article) Mike is grateful that Ntec will be bringing in a VOIP phone system to complement the internet services.

In The Town of Canton additional complaints are.

- A landscaping company reports that they cannot use billing and research services without internet access.
- Several individuals would be able to work from home if they had reliable internet, but with current provider, their employers won't allow that.
- Multiple parents state their children cannot do online schoolwork or access online textbooks.
- Dugan Valley Dairy complains that they are unable to do online purchasing, payroll, sales, research, tax filings, online hedging and bill paying. They have Dairy Robotics but are unable to remotely log into the system, if the robots can't access the internet, they have down times that cost them money.
- Dziekan Heating & Air Conditioning says they cannot do payroll, payables, purchasing and all other facets of business that require internet access.
- Kirsten Heck says she doesn't bother to try to subscribe to Frontier Internet, it is unusable, she drives to the City of Mondovi Library for internet needs.
- Tucker Silberhorn, owner of Contract Manufacturing Services says that he cannot install security cameras as the internet service is too unreliable.

In total, there are 37 farmers in this service area, 24 businesses, and several individuals who could work from home if they had adequate internet and 200 residences.

Pricing

50/50 Mbps	\$ 74.95/month
100/100 Mbps	\$104.95/month
250/250 Mbps	\$134.95/month
500/500 Mbps	\$194.95/Month
1/1 Gbps	\$274.95/Month

Ntec is enrolled as a provider in the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) and Lifeline. Anyone eligible for those programs will qualify for the affordable service option of 25/25 Mbps.

25/25 Mbps	\$ 49.95/month – affordable service option for eligible consumers
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Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband

e) Scalability Ntec will be doing construction for the Town of Mondovi this summer for a grant won in the previous grant cycle. A node and cabinet being placed with that project will also be utilized for the Town of Albany and Canton projects and be a cost saver. In addition to broadband, we anticipate offering the residents a VoIP phone product.

The infrastructure we will construct will allow for 1 Gig speeds today and 10 Gig speeds in the future.

f) Economic Development The towns of Albany and Canton have experienced declining real estate values as potential buyers are hesitant to buy a property without internet access. Most buyers are aware this is a problem in this area and ask before making an offer. Land sales to potential builders are non-existent without internet access. As mentioned above rental properties are difficult to lease.

United Health Group is a large employer in this area and provides most of its workers the opportunity to work from home. Several of the residents in Albany currently are employed there and would be provided this benefit. United Health Group requires fiber to the home and already has a working relationship with Ntec setting up these accounts. Customers with our service will be preferable hires to United Health Group.

g) Effect upon broadband service to adjacent areas as mentioned above Frontier is the existing provider and they have been unwilling to update their facilities in this area.

Ntec's Town of Albany deployment will increase property tax roll and boost economic activity and employment throughout Pepin and Buffalo County as evidenced by the County's \$100,000 and \$97,000 contribution to this project.

This is an extremely rural and sparsely populated area of Pepin and Buffalo County.

3.2.5 a) Other Information Supporting this Application

Nelson Communications Cooperative (Ntec) is an Incumbent Local Exchange Carrier certified to provide telecommunications service in the State of Wisconsin pursuant to Section 196.50(2)(b) of the Wisconsin State Statute. Ntec has demonstrated its ability to plan, finance, build and manage complex communications projects over its past 74 years.

Ntec has demonstrated financial, technical and operational abilities to successfully bring broadband infrastructure to the Town of Albany. In recent Broadband Expansion grants:

Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband

In 2020, Ntec completed a successful grant project with Buffalo County bring fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) to a very rural part of Western Wisconsin that would not otherwise have adequate internet access. The project was completed in less than one year from being awarded the grant. 4 residences were connected, two of them were farmers and one was a United Health Group employee who is now able to work from home.

- In 2021 we were awarded a grant for the Town of Mondovi. We have been purchasing materials throughout the winter (we have been able to receive purchasing discounts as we have also purchased materials for the anticipated project we are currently applying for) to start construction in the spring.

It's reputation as a strong Cooperative in western Wisconsin continues to spread fiber broadband services beyond its traditional ETC exchange area:

- In 2009, Ntec began a FTTH build out in its' ILEC area. This \$21 million dollar project was completed in 2015 bringing an all fiber network to 100% of our regulated service area. In January 2017 Ntec was recognized as a *Certified Gig-Capable Provider* by NTCA – the Rural Broadband Association.
- Ntec owns a subsidiary company that provides cable internet to two communities outside of our ILEC area. In the past five years we have made upgrades to this system adding a new CMTS using an OFDM carrier, new 3.1 cable modems and adding multiple fiber nodes to reduce node size. This has allowed us to increase speeds in these areas to 250 meg up and 50 meg down.

a) The proposed project will not duplicate existing broadband infrastructure. Frontier has not suggested that it will either reinforce its existing copper DSL infrastructure, not invest in FTTH in this area.

b) Nelson Communications Cooperative dba Ntec has 74 years of experience in the communication industry serving our local communities. Ntec is a Wisconsin cooperative owned by its community members and we understand the value of serving our rural communities. We know that rural youth have the potential to become the leaders and innovators of tomorrow. We also understand how important High Speed Broadband is to rural farmers and business owners.

Ntec has a strong cash and equity position.

f) A description of how the proposed project will affect the ability of individuals to access health care service from home, including any impact upon the costs of those services.

Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband

Marshfield Clinic located 30 miles away has already demonstrated their desire to improve telehealth in the rural communities by contributing \$10,000 funding to our Town of Mondovi Project (they only contribute once to a providers' projects).

Several residents expressed a desire to access telehealth doctor visits, access medical portals to communicate with their doctors, research medical conditions and order prescriptions. United Health Group offers telehealth visits for consumers with their insurance.

Mayo clinic is located 30 miles away. They have an online patient portal for patients to communicate with doctors and schedule appointments, pay bills, refill prescriptions.

g) A description of how the proposed project will affect the ability of students to access educational opportunities from home.

The Town of Albany and Canton project will increase access to online educational opportunities that were limited by winter travel, pandemic concerns, and raise future earnings

- The Albrecht family home schools their children and is limited in online courses they can access along with connecting with other home school groups and resources.
- Two families mentioned that they had to send their children to Grandparent's homes to access online classes during Covid and or quarantine. Other families took their students to the schools parking lot to access Wi-Fi and complete schoolwork in the car.
- Several families mentioned the inability to access online college classes for their high school and graduated students.
- Chippewa Valley Technical College 30 miles away only offers some of their courses online.

h) A description of actions taken by a city, village, town, or county in support of the grant application that have not been discussed in the context of a public-private partnership above, including but not limited to:

The Towns of Albany and Canton initially contacted Ntec requesting our assistance in obtaining high speed broadband for their community. The Towns are contributing all of their ARPA funds and additional money to provide a \$100,000 contribution for Albany and over \$31,000 for Canton. The towns applied for Telecommuter Forward! Community Certification as part of this

Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband

process. The Towns have held monthly meetings since August informing the community members of the planned project and generating support.

4.5.3 Review of Proposed Evaluation Criteria

- a) **Matching Funds (10 points)** Pepin County will contribute \$100,000. The Town of Albany will contribute \$100,000. Buffalo County will contribute \$97,000 and the Town of Canton will contribute \$31,191.23
- b) **Public-private partnerships (10 points)** Ntec has partnered with both Pepin and Buffalo County and the Town of Albany and Canton for this project.
- c) **Existing Broadband Service (15 points)** While the PSC broadband maps show that Frontier provides speeds of 6/1 or 12/1 in this area, the residents who provided speed tests to us showed that they were not able to achieve speeds of 5/.6 which is the PSC definition of unserved
- d) **Project Impact (15 points)** This project will have significant impact on the lives on the residents in the Town of Albany providing them with the capability of Gig service to their homes. One of the residents in the area compared it to living in a 3rd world country with his current speeds.
- e) **Scalability (10 points)** The Albany project is adjacent to Ntec's current ILEC service area. This project will allow us to expand our service area without the need to purchase additional central office equipment.
- f) **Economic development (10 points)** Residents of the proposed project would be eligible to work from home with United Health Group. Home Businesses would be able to grow their business with access to advertising and selling online. Home prices would increase if buyers were not scared away by lack of internet. Farmers would be able to generate more revenue by being able to track market trends. Developers may become interested in land purchases for development.
- g) **Effect upon broadband service to adjacent areas** the existing provider, Frontier has stated that they have no plans to develop their network in this area.
- i) **Letters of Support follow.** Including Letters from Senator Warren Petryk, the Durand and Mondovi School Districts, and Senator Jeff Smith

News Article

Frustrated rural telecom customers file complaints over internet service, but agencies lack oversight

Kelli Arseneau and Rick Barrett

Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Published 8 am CT Sept 16, 2021

For a few minutes of panic on Sunday, Feb. 3, 2019, Sandra Wright feared that her husband might be dead.

A week prior, a heavy snowstorm had damaged the Wrights' pole shed near Mondovi in western Wisconsin, causing two-thirds of the roof to cave in. Sandra's husband, Mike, and her brother, Doug, were repairing the shed when she heard a loud crash.

Sandra went out to the porch and heard her brother shout, "Call 911!" The remainder of the shed had collapsed on top of Mike.

Sandra ran inside, found the phone, and dialed 911.

The line was busy.

She tried again. And again.

Over and over, she got a busy signal.

Panicking, she fumbled through the phone book to find an alternate number to call. Her hands shook so hard, she could hardly keep her finger on the page to read the phone number for the Mondovi Police Department. It was closed on Sunday, but her call was transferred to the Buffalo County Sheriff's Department.

Luckily, Doug was able to find Mike in the rubble and lift a large pole that was crushing his leg. Mike managed to emerge with only severe bruising.

Emergency services arrived an hour and 15 minutes after the roof collapse. Sandra never did get through to 911.

The line - which also provides their internet service - was down for 8 hours that day.

Frustration over unreliable service

The Wrights get telephone and internet service through Frontier Communications, one of the nation's largest telecom companies. Mike said their unreliable phone connection and slow internet speeds are "a nightmare," and that their neighbors are equally fed up.

He and Sandra filed a complaint with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection, commonly known as DATCP. They had little hope it would accomplish anything, and it didn't. Despite receiving hundreds of complaints, the agency lacks authority to resolve telecom quality-of-service issues.

Deregulation of the industry, through changes in laws and court decisions, has lessened the abilities of state and federal agencies to hold service providers accountable to customers.

"There's nobody left with the necessary oversight," said Barry Orton, professor emeritus of telecommunications at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Yet millions of Americans have experienced phone-and-internet service issues that have been amplified during the COVID-19 pandemic — when working from home, taking an online class and other aspects of everyday life have become intertwined with telecommunications.

In many places, a mobile phone signal is barely available, or the so-called "landline" telephone depends on an aged copper wire system that's been poorly maintained as companies exit that part of their business.

Some rural Americans pay around \$100 a month for internet speeds that would be considered obsolete in urban areas, and even then, they don't always get what they've paid for or the service is unreliable.

In Chippewa County, Mike and Sandra Wright say they've all but given up on Frontier. They recently came across phone wires draped on top of the ground through a corn field near their house. Sandra said she sometimes wakes up in the middle of the night just to get online for a business the couple runs from home. The speeds are a little more usable then.



Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband

Letters of Support



ADMINISTRATION / FINANCE OFFICE

Pamela Hansen

Finance Director and Administrative Coordinator

740 Seventh Avenue West, P.O. Box 39

Durand, Wisconsin 54736

phansen@co.pepin.wi.us

(715) 672-8704 Fax (715)-672-8677

December 15, 2021

Mr. Adolph S. Pichler Jr.
Town of Albany Chair
N7029 Albany G
Mondovi, WI 54755

RE: Letter of Funding Commitment, Broadband Project Town of Albany

Dear Mr. Pichler,

I am sending you this letter as a confirmation of the action taken at the Pepin County Board meeting held on Wednesday, December 15th, 2021. At the meeting, the Pepin County Board approved the request for Pepin County's participation in your township's Broadband project by committing the dollar amount of \$100,000 in funding to improve Broadband access to the residents of the Town of Albany.

If you have any questions concerning this letter of funding commitment, please feel free to contact me.

Thank you for your service to your residents and we look forward to partnering with you on the Town of Albany broadband expansion project.

Sincerely,

Pamela Hansen, Administrative Coordinator

✓ cc. Laura Gullickson, CFO - Ntec

Pepin County Government will be united in **strong leadership**, **transparent operations**, **fiscal responsibility** and **promoting services** that protect, empower, and enhance a healthy and inviting community that offers opportunities for all.

Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband



Personnel Advisor
Ana Rolbiecki
608-685-6208

Ryan VanDeWalle
Administrative Coordinator
407 South Second Street PO Box 494
Alma, WI 54610-0494

Financial Advisor
Lisa Schuh
608-685-6207

Email:
Ryan.VanDeWalle@buffalocountyny.gov
Phone (608) 685-6235 Fax (608) 685-6300

February 24, 2022

Mr. Tony Poeschel
Chairperson
Town of Canton
5310 Tiffany Valley Road
Nelson, WI 54756

RE: Letter of Commitment, Broadband Funding Support

Dear Mr. Poeschel:

With the approval of the Buffalo County Finance Committee and in accordance with the policy set forth in Buffalo County Resolution 17-12-06, I am pleased to inform you the Town of Canton has met the requirements for the award of \$97,000.00 in broadband support funding. Buffalo County will honor this request as long as the provider and the Town of Canton remain in compliance with the guidelines set for in Resolution 17-12-06.

If you have any questions, concerning this letter of commitment, please contact Steve Schiffli at: 608.685.9101 or Stephen.Schiffli@buffalocountyny.gov

Thank you for your commitment to your residents and we look forward in assisting you in your broadband expansion project.

Sincerely,


Administrative Coordinator

RV:ss



Warren Petryk

State Representative • 93rd Assembly District

Friday, February 25, 2022

Steffany Powell Coker
Secretary to the Commission
Public Serve Commission
4822 Madison Yards Way
North Tower 6th Floor
Madison, WI 53705-9100

RE: Towns of Albany and Canton Broadband Grant

Dear Commission Members,

I write to you today to express my support for the Towns of Albany and Canton receiving the PSC Broadband Expansion Grant.

Increasing broadband access in the Towns of Albany and Canton would enable community members to access much needed services such as telehealth and virtual school, as well as maintain relationships with friends and family members during the COVID-19 pandemic. This important project will also maximize Western Wisconsin's potential to have a flourishing economy.

I ask you to please consider and approve the Towns of Albany and Canton Broadband Expansion Grant which will support economic development and foster increased access to improve the lives of the citizens of the townships.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions for me, please feel free to contact me in my office at (608) 266-0660.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Warren Petryk", written over a circular stamp or seal.

Warren Petryk
State Representative
93rd Assembly District

March 4, 2022

Stephanie Powell Coker
Secretary to the Commission
Public Service Commission of Wisconsin
4822 Madison Yards Way
North Tower-6th Floor
Madison, WI 53705-9100

Dear Review Panel Members,

As you consider applications for the 2022 round of the Broadband Expansion Grant Program, I urge you to consider Nelson Telephone Cooperative for their broadband deployment project. Nelson Telephone Cooperative has shown a strong dedication to expanding broadband to underserved and unserved areas in Buffalo County, Wisconsin and will continue to do so with their new proposed project in the Township of Canton. This project for your consideration will have a positive impact on residents in this community.

Nelson Telephone Cooperative has served west-central Wisconsin for 76 years. **The Cooperative has exemplary customer service and a commendable track record of expanding broadband to rural areas in Wisconsin.**

As you know, Buffalo County is home to over 13,000 residents and contains seven school districts. The COVID-19 pandemic forced our communities to operate remotely, emphasizing the importance of broadband access for our students, families, and farmers to thrive. Without reliable broadband access, the effects of the pandemic were compounded and rural communities were hit harder than other areas of Wisconsin.

Nelson Telephone Cooperative aims to bring 46 homes, including five farms, fiber cable within the Township of Canton. This project's success will increase in property values, connections for our businesses, and the ability for agriculture to utilize new innovative technologies. Our students will have more education opportunities and our elderly will have better access to telehealth. The Township of Canton is a beautiful and valued part of the state, and the approval of this grant application would allow them to improve residents' quality of life.

I am proud to represent Wisconsin's 31st Senate District, and I am committed to the betterment of Wisconsin as a whole. I recommend the approval of this grant application because I believe that Buffalo County is a great place to live and raise a family and that Nelson Telephone Cooperative is dedicated to helping these areas receive the broadband services they need.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Smith". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jeff" and last name "Smith" clearly distinguishable.

JEFF SMITH
State Senator



DURAND-ARKANSAW SCHOOL DISTRICT

604 7th Avenue East PO Box 190 Durand, Wisconsin 54736

Greg Doverspike, District Administrator
Michelle Zagozen, Director of Pupil Services
Gretchen Cipriano, Director of Teaching & Learning

Phone: (715) 672-8919 Fax: (715) 672-8930
Phone: (715) 672-8921 Fax: (715) 672-8930
Phone: (715) 672-8977 Fax: (715) 672-8930

February 25, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter confirms that the Durand-Arkansaw School District supports the application for a Wisconsin Public Service Commission Grant written as part of the Town of Albany Broadband Grant Program.

With the Federal Power Act of 1935, electricity was viewed as an essential public good and it ensured that wholesale power sales and transmission service be offered at rates that are "just and reasonable, and nondiscriminatory." Like electricity in the 30's, so is broadband in the 21st Century.

As we move further into the digital age, it is essential for the success of our students and our district that everyone has quality, reliable broadband while at school and at home. Most of our district has this due to the great work of local providers like Ntec. The Town of Albany is one of the areas in our district that does not have reliable high-speed internet. This puts these students and families at a disadvantage for a variety of reasons. It is for this reason that we strongly support this application on behalf of the students and families in this part of our district.

In conclusion, the Durand-Arkansaw School District is in complete support of the Town of Albany Wisconsin Public Service Grant Application. We will continue to work together with the Townships to keep our school district and communities progressing forward in a positive direction. Please help us continue our work.

With best regards

Greg Doverspike
Superintendent
Durand-Arkansaw School District

Junior / Senior High School
Bill Clouse, Principal
604 7th Avenue East
Durand, WI 54736
(715) 672-8917

Caddie Woodlawn Elementary School
Erika Johnson, Principal
650 Auth Street
Durand, WI 54736
(715) 672-8977

PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

This Public/Private Partnership Agreement ("Agreement") is made by and between the Town of Albany, a Wisconsin Municipal Corporation (the "Town" or "Albany") and Nelsen Communications Cooperative dba Ntec a Wisconsin corporation ("Ntec"). The Town and Ntec are individually referred to as "Party" and collectively referred to as "Parties".

WHEREAS, the Town seeks to help provide access to broadband services in unserved and/or underserved areas and to encourage economic development within its boundaries; and

WHEREAS, Ntec proposes to construct broadband infrastructure to reach certain unserved and/or underserved resident and business locations in the Town where such service is currently unavailable or is prohibitively expensive; and

WHEREAS, Ntec is applying for a Fiscal Year 2022 WI PSC Broadband Expansion Grant ("Grant") to build a Fiber-To-The-Home ("FTTH") network throughout the Town boundary ("the Project"); and

WHEREAS, the Town is a political subdivision of the State of Wisconsin; and

WHEREAS, the Town desires to enter into this Agreement to work with Ntec to secure funding through application(s) to public grants, awards and loan programs intending to construct broadband infrastructure or through alignment of other appropriate external funding sources for economic development to support the Project; and

WHEREAS, at the August 9, 2021 Town board meeting, the board voted to proceed with Ntec and the proposed joint broadband Project between the Town and Ntec, and to contribute an amount of \$100,000.00 to extend fiber into the Project area *conditioned upon the award of a Public Service Commission of Wisconsin ("Commission") Broadband Expansion Grant to Ntec for the Project*; and

WHEREAS, the Town will assist in the public education and outreach in support of successful Project outcomes. The Town shall also provide in-kind assistance to the Project in the form of waived fees for permitting, zoning and easements necessary for the Project; and follow their Telecommunicator Forward Certification.

WHEREAS, enhanced broadband access and availability will be utilized to position the Town for desirable economic growth through addressing existing service disparities, while providing a means for accessing the advantages of technology-based economic development practice for the subject locations of this Project.

NOW, THEREFORE, the Parties agree as follows:

- I. **Purpose.** The Parties agree to incorporate and exercise their powers jointly for the purpose of providing support and/or revenues for the Project. Exhibit A includes a map showing the Project area where Ntec fiber facilities are to be installed. The Project will extend Ntec's existing broadband network with a Fiber-to-the-Home ("FTTH") network to existing resident and business locations within the Town that requests services from Ntec.

Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband

Page 2 of 3

2. **Authorization.** Each Party shall authorize the execution, delivery and performance of this Agreement and authorizes Ntec, as an agent to execute any other agreements requested to be executed and delivered hereunder, as an agent for the Parties.
3. **Project Funding.** Ntec intends to request a Commission Grant. The Town has agreed to provide a contribution of \$100,000.00 to the cost of the Project, to be paid as provided in section 4 below. Ntec, directly and through other sources, will provide the balance of the funding for the Project. If the Grant is awarded, Ntec may accept the Grant and enter into an acceptable Commission Broadband Grant agreement or, in Ntec's sole discretion, may decline the Grant and not enter into a Grant agreement. The Town's contribution shall only be payable if the Grant is accepted.
4. **Payment to Ntec.** The Town shall pay to Ntec the amount of \$100,000.00 upon completion of the fiber facilities construction for the Project.
5. **Project Ownership.** At all times, Ntec shall have sole ownership of the Project and shall be solely responsible for the construction, operation and maintenance of the Project.
6. **Liability.** Ntec shall have sole liability for the Project and any and all claims, obligations, liability, costs, demands, damages, expenses, fines, penalties or causes of action ("Claims") that may arise from the Project and its construction, operation, or maintenance. Ntec and its successors and assigns shall indemnify and hold the Town and its officials, employees and agents harmless from any and all Claims, including the costs of litigation and reasonable attorney's fees, which may arise out of the ownership, construction, maintenance, or operation of the Project regardless of any fault of the part of the Town, its officials, employees, or agents.
7. **Records.** Ntec will maintain and be the custodian of all records associated with the administering and performance of this Agreement, and will make those records available to the Town upon request.
8. **Report.** Ntec shall meet with the Town of Albany on a semi-annual basis for the purpose of presenting an oral report on the status of the Project. The date, time and place of such meeting shall be determined cooperatively among the Parties. No less than five (5) days prior to such meeting, Ntec shall provide a written report regarding siting, construction progress with respect to the Project.
9. **Effective Date.** This Agreement shall become effective upon its execution by both Parties.
10. **Termination Date.** If the Grant is awarded, this Agreement shall terminate 30 days after completion of the Project. The completion date of the Project will be agreed upon by both Parties. If the Grant is not awarded, this Agreement shall terminate upon notice from the Commission that the Grant will not be awarded. If the Grant is not awarded, neither Party shall have any obligation to proceed with the Project. If the Grant is awarded in an amount

Ntec FY2022 Towns of Albany and Canton Fiber Broadband

Page 3 of 3

less than requested in the Grant application, the Parties shall confer and determine the feasibility of proceeding with the Project.

11. **Amendments.** Any amendments to this Agreement must be in writing and signed by the Parties.
12. **Entire Agreement.** This Agreement, including its recitals and exhibits constitutes the entire agreement and understanding of the Parties with respect to the subject matter of this Agreement. There are no representations or understandings of any kind not stated in this Agreement.
13. **Governing Law.** This Agreement shall be governed by the laws of the State of Wisconsin.
14. **Counterparts.** This Agreement may be executed in two or more counterparts each of which shall be deemed an original but all of which together shall constitute one and the same instrument.

TOWN OF ALBANY:

By: Adolph S. Richter, Jr.
Adolph Richter, Jr., Town Chairman

Date: 2-25-2022

NELSON COMMUNICATIONS COOPERATIVE:

By: Christy Berger
Christy Berger - Executive Vice President

Date: 2-25-2022